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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KAWC](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: NEW CROATIAN INTEL CHIEF WANTS GOOD COOPERATION

REF: A) ZAGREB 2044 B) ZAGREB 2060

Classified By: Poloff Justin Friedman, reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

SUMMARY and COMMENT

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[¶](#)1. (C) The scandal (reftels) surrounding the Counter Intelligence Agency (POA) has peaked with President Mesic and Prime Minister Sanader agreeing to fire POA Chief Josko Podbevsek and nominate Tomislav Karamarko as his replacement. Prior to his successful confirmation hearings and official installation on December 15, Karamarko told us on December 13 that he planned to focus on professionalizing the POA, improving international cooperation including in the search for ICTY fugitive Ante Gotovina, and promoting his vision of unifying the direction of the intelligence agencies under a single leadership along the lines of recent U.S. reforms. Karamarko, who resigned as director of the now defunct National Security Office in 2002 when these same reform proposals were rejected, will face an uphill battle to centralize control of Croatian intelligence agencies in a country where most of the political class have personal and often bitter memories of the abuse of intelligence powers by the Yugoslav and Tudjman governments. END SUMMARY and COMMENT.

OLD NEW FACE FOR POA

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[¶](#)2. (C) Following accusations that agents of the Counter Intelligence Agency (POA) acted unethically, if not necessarily illegally in attempting to coerce journalist Helena Puliz into acting as a POA informant (ref A), President Mesic and PM Sanader agreed last week to fire POA chief Josko Podbevsek. Late on Friday (Dec. 10), they agreed to nominate Tomislav Karamarko as his replacement. Karamarko told us on Monday (Dec. 13) that he had been reluctant to leave the security business he had founded and take a salary cut to return to public service. Ultimately, he said, it was Mesic's personal appeal that compelled Karamarko to say yes. Karamarko has a long public service career (see Bio Notes), last serving as head of the National Security Office (UNS) until 2002 when he resigned when his intelligence reform plans were not accepted by the then coalition government.

GOTOVINA CASE

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[¶](#)3. (C) Karamarko claims that the press has distorted his views on the Gotovina case. He admitted that he has publicly stated that it would be better if suspected war criminals were tried in Croatian courts. Karamarko told us that he still thinks that the Gotovina indictment was politically motivated, rather than legally justified. However, he believes that Gotovina must prove his innocence in The Hague. When we reminded him that the international community will judge the Croatia and the Croatian intelligence community on the basis of how it performs in the Gotovina case, Karamarko said he would insist on professional behavior from his organization, including fully cooperating in the search for

Gotovina.

REFORM PLANS

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14. (C) Karamarko said he wanted the POA to become a full partner in the global coalition fighting terrorism. His priorities would be to improve the professionalism of the POA in order to ensure that the rights

of citizens were fully respected and that the POA's activities could never been seen as politically motivated. He also said he would immediately take steps to stop leaks of POA information to the press. Beyond that, Karamarko said he would like to improve international cooperation, particularly with the U.S. In addition, Karamarko said he would pursue his reform agenda of bringing management of Croatian intelligence organizations together along the lines of recently approved reforms in the U.S.

BIO NOTES

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15. (U) Karamarko has a long professional association with President Mesic. He joined the HDZ in 1990 as an early founding member. He became chief of the City of Zagreb Police in 1995, but ran afoul of hard-line HDZ rightists Ivic Pasalic, Ljubo Cesic-Rojs, and Miroslav Kutle for his investigations into their corrupt business dealings, and was removed from that office. In 2000 Karamarko served as chief of Mesic's presidential campaign and became both National Security Advisor and head of the National Security Office (UNS) upon Mesic's election victory. According to press reports, as head of the UNS, Karamarko came into conflict with the POA predecessor organization, the Police Intelligence Service (SZUP) when he tried to assert control over its controversial activities. Karamarko left the UNS when that organization was shut down in 2002 under an intelligence reform law passed by the coalition government.

16. (SBU) Karamarko understands and speaks only limited English.

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